# Untold Stories 2

## Emotions

STATUS OF WOMEN COUNCIL OF THE NWT

The Status of Women Council of the NWT is very pleased to bring you this publication of Untold Stories. It is titled "Untold Stories 2" since it is the second book of stories from victims of family violence. The first book, published in 1990, was a useful resource for addressing the need for community understanding of family violence.

*Untold Stories 2* has stories of women who took steps to find help and support in leaving or resolving their violent relationships. We have also included photographs of front line workers, of women listening, and of women sharing and laughing. Children's drawings show the fear and sadness they experience in witnessing violence against their loved ones. A song and a poem are also included to illustrate the different forms of expressing or telling one's story.

We are grateful to the Health and Social Services, Family Violence Prevention Program of the Government of the Northwest Territories for the funding for this project. In addition to the stories we included a song written by Anne Kasook called "Mamma" and a poem by Bernadette Norwegian called "Untitled". Thanks Ann and Bernadette for adding these to our storybook. A special thanks to Mary Beth Levan of Kalemi Consultants for her patience and understanding in pulling all this together.

A big thank you and a huge BRAVO for all the women who shared their stories so everyone can learn and begin to understand. Good for you!!!

Sincerely

Harriet Geddes
VP, Status of Women Council of the NWT

*Liz Kallak of Hay River, and a contributor to this booklet, with Harriet Geddes of Fort Providence, Acting President of the Status of Women Council of the NWT.*

*Cover Photo: left, holding picture is Stephanie McCabe; right holding picture is Angela JAcobs. They are both child advocate staff at the Hay River Family support Centre. The artist of this picture (rainbow and hearts) is Amie Bradbury, age 6.*

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*Alphonsine McNeely, Delphine Pierrot and Florence Barnaby of Fort Good Hope NWT ... all working to end violence against women.*

Dear Women of the Shelter,

It has been eight years since I went through this shelter. I recall the first day I arrived at the shelter with my two sons. I was bruised, scared and hurt. I felt like no one believed what was happening to me. Once I got settled in I soon realized that I didn't like the structure of the program for it was too strict. You see all my childhood life I didn't have any real sort of structure to follow. I just went from weekend to weekend with my parents drinking and fighting. I soon got used to the structure and adopted it to use in my own home, which proved to be effective in my parenting and has brought stability to my family.

I was so relieved when I began sharing my story. The shelter understood and cared for the abuse that took place in my life. This was the first time at that time someone cared and began supporting me back to recovery. Through my tears I began to heal and gain my independence.

There I was so lonely with two hyper boys out of control. I spent a lot of time running around after them, like my husband, "begging" them to please be quiet. My eldest son was five years old and could barely speak a word due to the fear that my husband and I instilled in him. The shelter began counselling my sons in therapy. I was taught a few techniques to discipline and work with my children. This was a great support to me.

My husband made so much promises that were all broken. He even enrolled into the treatment program. Once he completed the program he had expected me to return home. When I did not return home he began drinking just as I thought. He didn't go to treatment for himself but rather for his family.

I decided there I was giving this shelter 100% of my time. I started to feel so free and my children were a lot more at peace. I began feeling better about myself, my life and my future. I just kept on growing and healing from the pain and memories I carried.
The shelter helped me get a place of my own. I was so scared of the idea that when the day

came and I had to watch the movers haul in all my own furniture I was so excited. I felt the empowerment in my life then. I felt that the shelter had given me my independence back. Once I completed my six weeks at the shelter I continued my counselling with the family counselling centre. I had a lot of anger and pain that kept me from being a good parent. I soon got a job and enrolled into Aurora College with my grade seven skills. By the end of the year I completed grade ten. This got me into the Nursing Program, Alcohol and Drug Counselling Program and Addictions Studies Diploma Program.

Today I am a single mother of three. I have never stopped growing in my personal development since I was in your shelter. I believe the shelter has given me the tools to strive to be my best. When I think of where I was before I left my home and husband, if I had never left, I could have gotten stuck in a place where I can only go. Today I recently completed my two-year term serving my community as their Chief and Mayor. I am the first woman Chief in our community's history. My growth has given me a bright future with an endless list of possibilities. Along the way I have met a lot of people who supported me. My journey started at the shelter and since then I've been sober for the past eight years, with a healthy lifestyle to guide me along the way. My mission is to reach out to other women in the north, to send a message to women that we are no longer in the dark to hide our pain from others. I think we have so much strong women in our communities who have endured so much. These ladies are holding so much experience and stories that could help a battered woman.

I am one of these women. I've been battered for six years in my marriage. Thanks to the shelter for their support and for being there. Today I am able to speak about my pain with strength and move on with my life. Thanks to the dedicated people who continue to work with the shelters and who have helped me in my journey.

*God Bless All Your Paths*

Ms. Delphine Pierrot (Kakfwi)

103-07154/

*Bev Heron, Carol Jordan, Eleanor Elias, Barbara Genaille and Dora Zaparaniuk are the staff at the Fort Smith women's shelter, Sutherland House.*

## Martha's Story

I always had a dream that someone would love me for who I was. Leaving was overwhelming cause I had to leave his whole family. When you break up it's not just leaving the perpetrator, you leave his family ... and sometimes you also have to leave your own family, your hometown, your friends and your job. It's your whole world.

The system and the man traps you into staying. There is no housing. He damages the house and leaves you with the bills. There are children. The husband keeps everything. He drinks. If you can't get into the shelter, or there is no shelter, where do you go? The family and his family puts expectations on you re food and shelter. Income support only allows you to earn $400 above what they give you. If you get caught earning more than that you are cut off for 2 months. It takes people a year to get their first step in place. And the first step is to decide if you're ready to leave the abuse. When you go back to the man it's worse. If you don't go back a lot of men will hunt you down. Many of these men are wicked, truly evil.

As for me ... there was a lot of abuse ... one May 9 I came home and he was in the bathroom with my daughter and he was drunk. There was a 40-ounce bottle of booze in the bathroom. I felt like I was hit and on the spot I decided "I can't take this." He had a court appearance the next day and it was my daughter's birthday too. Because he wanted to go out he picked a fight with me. (He'd pick a fight so he'd have an excuse to blame me and then leave to go out drinking and drugging.) He left and a while later the police came and told me that he had missed court. Later that night I was worried that he would come home and beat me up but the police phoned and said they had him. I knew he'd blame me. I never charged him, but the cops knew how he treated me. Anyway, he was released on a promise he'd attend court. I made a cake for my daughter's birthday. He came home, didn't stay for any cake and just left again. In the end he was sentenced to 18 months.

My husband was drug addict: hash and grass. After all the drug money was spent we lived on

$64 a month. When he was in jail he expected me to bring him drugs. I used to hold drugs for dealers cause they knew I was not going to use them or sell them. When I took them to my husband in jail he would sell them there to the other inmates. However, there was a riot at that jail and all the inmates were sent to a different jail in another town. He called from that jail and I told him then that I was leaving him. I also told the staff at the jail that I was leaving him and he wasn't allowed to call me.

I went to legal aid and told them I needed help. I had a peace bond on him after he got out of jail and he was facing more jail time anyway. But I was still scared of him. My brother in law came over and put plywood on my windows and locks on all the doors ... he even came and stayed with me and brought a gun with him. So we were as safe as we could be under the circumstances.

My husband then said that all the furniture was his cause we had a house from the housing (authority) and his name was on it. So he came over and, while his brother watched him, he took away all the furniture. I slept on the floor with my two kids with just coats over us. Then he took up with his brother's girlfriend. The police drove by our place twice each night. In the end my dad sent me down south for a while.

I tried to give my husband visitation with our kids and even took the kids to see him. But I had to become very aggressive very fast. I resorted to tough ways to get by and I was already tough from growing up in the Baffin. I used to hold drugs for dealers cause I never used them myself and they knew that my place was safe for them to leave drugs. I got straight cash for holding the drugs for them. That's how I got furniture. Then I also went to welfare. But my husband's mom told welfare I was abusing the kids. So welfare phoned me. I set up a meeting with them and my mother in law at the same time. At that meeting I told welfare and his mother all the family secrets. So in the end they gave me some help.

Ten years later my mother in law phoned me and apologized for doing that to me and said that she knew all along he was abusive. Now we are very close. She was very traditional ... when you marry someone you are with them till death no matter how they treat you. I have status with his family now cause I stood up to them.

At the same time I was fighting to get our lives together my best friend told me I had to work. She forged some applications in my name and when I got to the first place for an interview she pushed me in the door and took off. I had no idea what I was doing there or what job I was supposed to be applying for! But they did hire me and I worked at that place for years.

But in the end I left the eastern Arctic 8 years later. I had to leave cause there was so much drinking and people who were trying to get away from the violence were always staying at my house. I started putting vodka in my coffee to cope with it all. So I came to the Northwest Territories. My friends and the people I worked with wanted to come with me.

I've learned that there is more to me than I thought! Here is my advice to women who want to put the violence behind them:

- *Look in the mirror and ask yourself, "What do you want."*
- *Don't think that it's impossible.*
- *Many people have done it and left with less resources.*
- *Take it one day at a time. Don't think about tomorrow.*
- *Take care of yourself and do the steps one at a time.*
- *Its not what people tell you that you need ... do what you know you need to do.*
- *Things happen for a purpose ... so we can learn.*

*Barb Saunders, Executive Director of the NWT Status of Women Council discusses NWT social programs with Judith Wright-Bird of the Tulita Dene Band Council.*

## Sandy's Story

I am from the prairies. In our religious community it was common, at the time, for marriages to be arranged by parents. So I got married to a local man, Roger. As soon as we started having children he started drinking. But I always kept what was going in our house to myself. We had 6 children and I also worked at the local hospital. He worked on and off.

Around the mid 70's he started accusing me sleeping around on him and he beat me up. He'd scream at the kids when he was drunk. He would choke me and grab me by the back of my hair. He beat my son with a belt quite often. He kicked me and broke my tailbone. I couldn't really sit down for a long time.

Finally one day I saw his suitcases at the door and he said he was leaving. The 18 month old was crying and grabbing him and he just pushed her away. He grabbed me by the throat. I just said, "Get the hell out of here." He threw his wedding band at me. Once I got my breath I just said, "Now!" He said he didn't have any money so I gave him my $60 of holiday pay. He didn't say good-bye to the kids.

Two weeks later he phoned and asked about the kids and then hung up. Then three weeks later he phoned to say he was coming over to shoot the kids and me. I called my brother and he came and stayed with us. I also called the police and they kept watch over our house ... they knew him and knew he was violent.

But in the next five years he never called or came back. He phoned my daughter sometimes. That was all. He died a few years ago.

At the time, after he left, I moved with all the kids to a bigger city. In those days I got $450 a month from welfare for me and the six children and the rent alone was $250. But I was renting from a really wonderful couple who helped me a lot. They babysat the children when I worked ... I have never lost touch with them over the years.

Five years later I moved with the children to a small northern mining town. A man I knew from my old hometown had visited me in the city and asked me to come and live with him in this small

town up north. I wasn't sure if it would be the best thing for all of us. But after I visited the town and we arranged housing we all came north. The kids did really well … made friends and went to school.

Today I have a wonderful life. My children are doing very well and have children of their own. We get together quite often. My husband and I have a cottage out of town at the lake, which is just so peaceful and beautiful. We love to spend time there together. He is always puttering around there, making some new thing to entertain the grandchildren … and he treats me like gold. The strange thing is that he danced with me at my wedding to my first husband, almost 40 years ago now, and told me then that one day he would be with me. I thought it was such a strange thing to say to someone who just got married, but it turned out to be true in the end. We laughed about that just the other day.

I want to say to all women who end up with abusive men: don't give up! And don't give up on your children! There is a light at the end of the tunnel!

*The "Violence Hurts" picture is by Cheryl Fabian, age 12.*

The cycle of abuse has been an on-going issue for as long as I can remember. I was about four years of age when I first experienced and witnessed the use of alcohol and violence. My parents seemed to be enjoying this so called "party" for a few hours. During the wee hours of the morning I was awakened to swearing and fighting. I could not understand what was happening but I knew that I was very afraid. Soon, everything in the house was being thrown outside and my mom and I had to find a place to go. This life continued for many years with my mother being beaten black and blue. Many nights my brothers and I had to hide under the bed and try to comfort each other.

At the age of eight I was sexually abused by my mother's cousin. I did not know what had happened to me other than I knew that I was hurt really bad. At the time I thought that I had got a big cut on my bottom because I was bleeding. My mom did not question this, but told her friends that I had started my menstrual which at the time I could not understand. The drinking and violence continued and my parents separated many times.

At the age of 12 I experienced another incident of sexual abuse and became afraid of men. I was always afraid to say "no' thinking that I would be forced anyway and end up being hurt real bad. These incidents continued to happen to me and I didn't realize that I started looking for security or whatever security was. I had blocked the first two incidents that happened when I was eight and twelve and only revealed them later.

At the age of 14 some of the guys were charged with having sex with a minor and were sent to jail. This was a very traumatizing time for me as I was made to feel that it was all my fault and that I should have been sent away instead. I felt hated by everyone and thought that no one would ever love me. I was struggling to go to school and took in everything that was said to me. My sense of security continued to grow stronger and I was determined to find someone to care for me. I had thoughts of having my own home at the time (dreaming I guess) so that I wouldn't have to go home to my parents. They were well into drinking and I was afraid of who was going to bother me while I was sleeping

and worried about where I was going to hide when the fighting started.

At 15 I met my husband and believed that this was my security. No one could hurt me anymore. But I was wrong and felt trapped. These were the days when violence was kept within the home or family. Once again I was made to feel that I deserved the beatings for the sexual incidents that took place when I was younger. I would get beaten until I was knocked out and many times I wondered if I would see tomorrow. This went on for about seven years with the abuse becoming more regular and at times without the use of alcohol. My shiners and bruises became more frequent and it seemed that my life would never change.

One night after a drinking bout my husband and I went home and he took a broom and started beating me. I was on the floor and he was telling me to "get up you fucking bitch". As I tried to get up he kicked me in the stomach and I lost my breath and went back down. He did this a few times and finally he grabbed my hair and rubbed my face on the floor. This burned all the skin off the left side of my face. He then dragged me into the bedroom and took his belt off and started to whip me all over my body. (Whipping and punching, among other things, were constant in this relationship.) When he felt that whipping was enough he started biting me all over my body and my face. I'm not sure how he stopped but it seemed like eternity.

The next day he continued to drink and out of fear I had a few drinks with him. Later on in the day he started to rough and bite me up again, even though I was done up from the night before. One of my children ran to call the police and when they came he was still biting on part of my hand. The police took him and charged him as I stated that I was too afraid to do it. He had threatened me many times that if I reported him he would hurt me so bad that I would never be able to walk again.

The police stated that they knew that this was happening for many years but no one seemed to want to report it. I told them that everyone was afraid of him. Today I'm thankful that my daughter ran out and called the police.

I decided I had to do something as I kept having nervous breakdowns and would end up in the hospital. I thought I was losing my mind. I went away for a month to a town that had a mental health counsellor. I talked to the counsellor a lot and began to understand what was happening to me. He helped me but told me that I had a lot of anger inside that I had to deal with. At the time I didn't know what he meant as I always thought of myself as a gentle and caring person. I went home again after that. But he was right as in the next few years I became very angry and would explode on many occasions. I remember one time dumping the garbage can all over the house for example. I just felt so much anger for all those years I had taken abuse from everyone. I saw that my being nice to everyone was sometimes just a mask to cover over my anger and how I really felt inside. I knew then that I had to take some more steps.

I began standing up to my husband. I just confronted him when the tension started rising and told him to stop taking out his problems on his wife and children. When I saw that certain look on his face I knew that he was going to get violent. I stepped in right away and took charge of the situation and stopped him right on the spot. Although the physical abuse stopped, there was emotional, mental and sexual abuse that needed to be worked on and I managed to work on a healing process for myself. Over several years the violence tapered off. But there were several years where my anger seemed to come out everywhere and I broke dishes more than once.

It has taken many years of hard work to change my life but I realized that the cycle had to stop or it would continue with my children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. There are still things I have to work on as I was so well trained to think that I have to always report to everyone exactly what I am doing at all times. I feel like I am always the guilty one in some court room, always explaining and explaining every little move I make. I know I don't have to do that but it is hard to break the habit as I was so trained to be obedient and like a slave to the people around me.

Today my family is all together and we are all happy that the cycle of violence continues to be broken. I will continue to assist others, whether paid or not, in the care-giving field of family violence. My hat goes off to all of you women who have worked hard to BREAK THE SILENCE. I can see that many women are becoming courageous, and confident that they can say "NO MORE", and are able to end the cycle. Maybe the violence doesn't stop overnight but you can't wait for other people to do it for you. You have to take control yourself and say "STOP".

We must encourage our leaders and politicians to support and give adequate funding to the shelters and transition homes if we want a better and healthy future for our children, and their children for generations to come.

*Please note that this is a very short version of my untold story.*

*Dora Zaparaniuk baking treats for the women and children at Sutherland House in Fort Smith.*

## Fiona's Story

My story started in New Brunswick when I was 16. I was dating a boy and within six months of starting to see him he was abusing me physically, emotionally and sexually. He controlled my life.

That summer I was going on vacation with my family and he told me I wasn't allowed to take any jeans or shorts with me on vacation. I guess he didn't want anyone looking at me. My mom thought it was strange I didn't have shorts or jeans but I didn't tell her what was happening. I can't really remember when he started hitting me. He would be verbally abusive and then push and slap me. He always called me a "slut" and "whore" and accused me of "screwing" my brothers and father. In fact, I think one of the reasons I stayed with him is that he said he would make it public that I had sex with my brothers and father if I ever left him. There was no incest in my family but there was in his and I think that's why he projected it onto me, and my family.

In the end I was with him for five years and we had a daughter together. I had my daughter when I was 17. Even during the pregnancy he was punching me, pulling my hair and throwing me around. I stayed at home with my parents when she was born but I was at that age where I just hated my parents and was always defying them. My parents wouldn't let him even in the driveway but I found a way to see him and while I was with him he would usually beat me up or rape me. Or sometimes he would leave me in the bushes and then find ways to scare me or just leave me there so I had to walk back.

After my daughter was a few years old I moved with him in a house he got really cheap. We fixed it up. But nothing changed. He would tie me up and rape me and throw me in the snow with no clothes. He would beat me on a daily basis. I figured out that he would stop sooner if I didn't fight back. So I would just go limp. My daughter saw a lot of this too. He was totally unpredictable. I never knew when he would start. Even after we got engaged he was beating me up a half hour after he gave me the ring. He also used to bite me on my legs and arms so I wouldn't wear shorts or short sleeves.

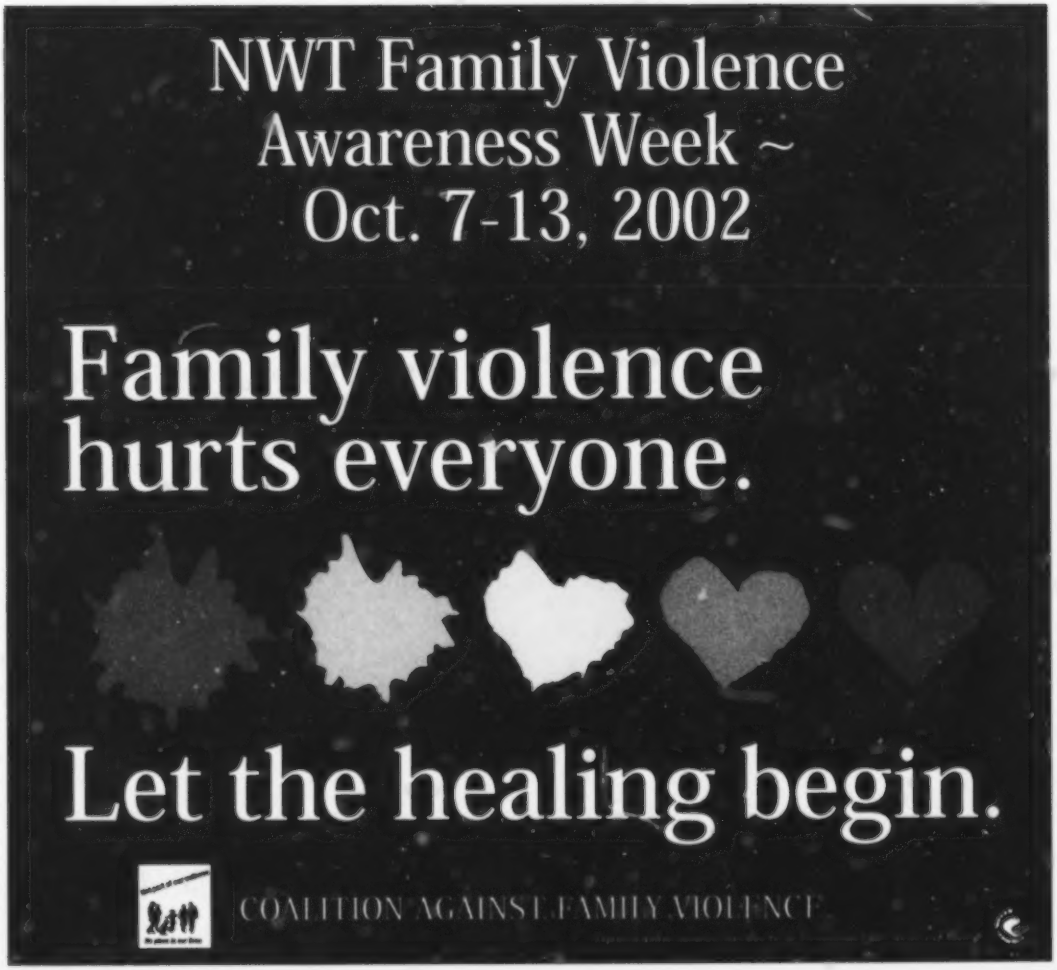
There were times when I tried to escape. Once my aunt found me hiding in a closet and took me away to her hometown for three weeks. But I went back to him. But after only one week back with him he was doing it again. Another time his sister was in our driveway and she could hear him beating me up. I managed to run away to my parents and his sister took our daughter. He came over to my parents place and broke a window to get in and took both of us back home. He tied me up with an extension cord and beat me up some more. When these crises were over we would seem like a normal happy couple. But I was always looking over my shoulder. I stopped talking to my friends cause he accused me of telling them lies about him. He watched everything I did.

Another time I was asleep on the couch and woke up with him putting his penis in my mouth and said "You can blow me cause you're blowing everyone else in town." I started to gag and he threw me against the wall. I phoned my mom and she got her sister and husband to come for me. I asked them to meet me somewhere else. So I crept out of the house quietly and hid in the grass in a yard some distance from our house. I was terrified he was coming after me. I heard a rustle in the grass behind me and my heart stopped. But it was just our dog coming after me thank god. I ran over to my aunt's car and told them I had had enough and wasn't going back. They didn't make much of that cause they'd heard me say it before.

Anyway, they drove me to my parent's house and later I went back to get my things. And I did sever all ties with him. In the end I left my hometown with my daughter and went to university in another province. I started university at 24 and most of my friends were gone. But I got a degree in sociology and religion and have been working with people ever since. He has called me a few times and has never asked about our daughter. I have never laid charges against him. But I don't think the police would do much about it if I did cause he was a rat for the police and they would protect him.

Today I have a very good life with my daughter and understand a lot more about what I went through. It was 11 years ago. I have tried to help other women and girls by telling them what happened to me ... I'm not afraid to tell them the truth about all of it.

I think women and teen girls need to realize that men are never going to change for anyone or anything. And I advise all women to get out as soon as you realize what is happening to you and your children.


NWT Family Violence
Awareness Week ~
Oct. 7-13, 2002
Family violence
hurts everyone.
Let the healing begin.
COALITION AGAINST FAMILY VIOLENCE

## Susan's Story

I was at the age of 14 when my parents arranged a marriage for me. I stayed with the man for about four months or so, then I met my husband. At first he treated me with respect and kindness. Then later on in the year he started to change his attitude towards me after my first son was born. His jealousy started to come out, then he would verbally abuse me saying I'm spending too much time with the baby.

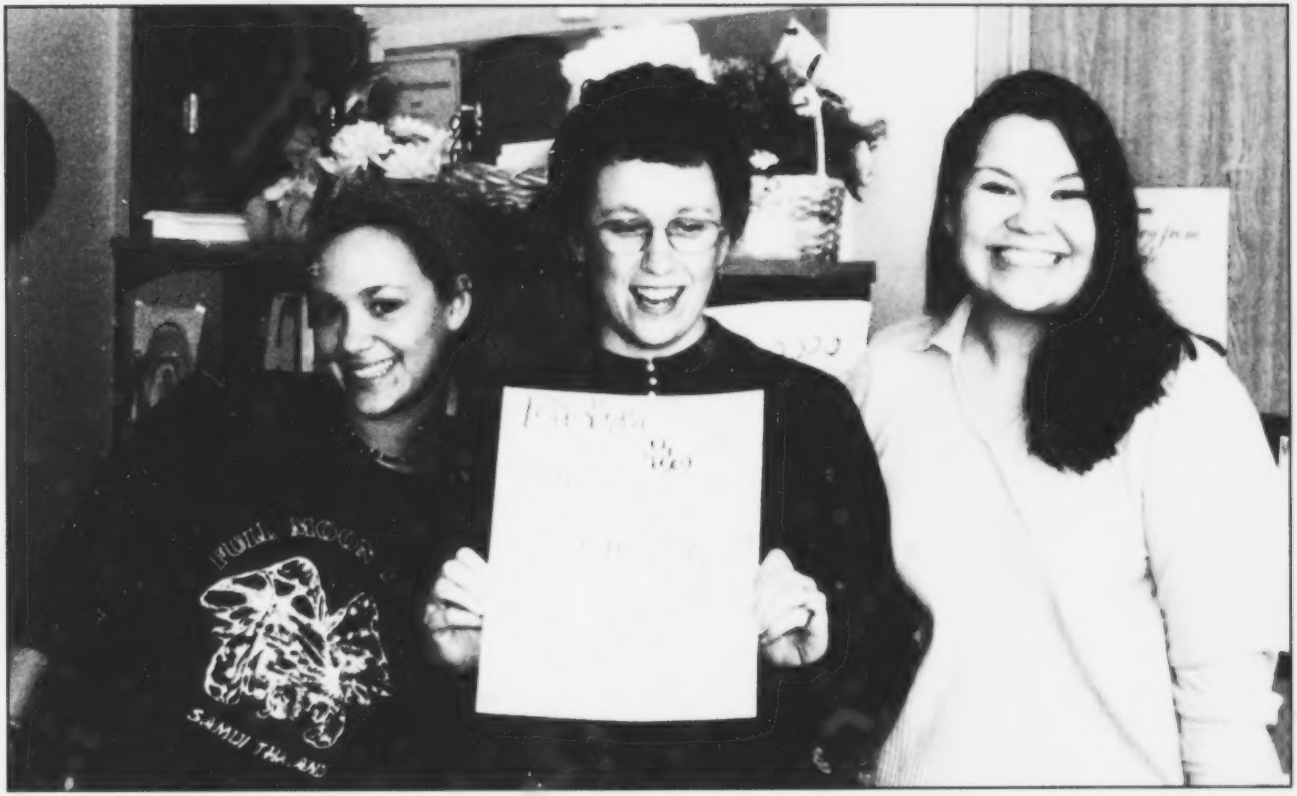
When the baby grew older my husband started to physically abuse me and my four year old son. He kicked me with his hiking boots and bit me on my leg. He would throw my son against the wall and called him names that were hurtful. I did not go for help of any kind because I was afraid he would hurt us more or even kill us.

As the years went by I found myself a job as a trainee for the addictions in my home town. My husband did not like the idea of me working, but he wasn't working himself so I had to find a job that would feed me and my boys. He started accusing me of breaking up families because of my job.

I had to travel out of the community for more training. As we were doing role plays, that's when I broke my silence and reached out for help. I left the man and went right back into another abusive relationship. I had cuts and bruises. I moved to Alberta with him to make our relationship work because I thought if we moved somewhere else different things would get better.

I stayed with him in Alberta for eight months before he started abusing me again. It got so bad that I had to be removed from Alberta and put into a shelter in Fort Smith on my way back to Inuvik. That was October of 1993. When I got to Fort Smith I was a mess ... all the buildings looked like they were made of tissue paper and everything seemed so empty. I was totally lost, confused and afraid. The shelter in Fort Smith made a big difference in my life.

I see everything totally different today. I am now remarried to a man that cares for me, we met at a bible college. We have three beautiful daughters that I adore and want to protect from harm. I want to tell women not to give up hope for themselves and their children.



*Stephanie McCabe, Annette Rideout and Angela Jacobs advocate for children at the Hay River Family Support Centre.*

## Penny's Story

We moved here in 1991 when my oldest was a baby. We stayed for a few months then went back home. I wanted to go back home cause my husband started drinking and hitting me. But I found out about the women's shelter here before I went back home. Before then I didn't know that there were such places.

After a year we came back here again. My ex got a job then so we stayed. And then in the summer I got a job too. He was still drinking. My ex would trap me in the house, besides hitting me, and once he was sober he'd accuse me of making it all up. I knew about the women's shelter so I used to just take off and go there. He said the shelter was just talking me into leaving him and all they did was break up families. But the kids felt safe there and after a while I'd get there before he hit me instead of after. I had another baby but I was getting smarter about knowing when it was going to happen.

We got married and he would drink for days, especially in winter and spring. Those months were the worst. This went on for years. He would drink and I would take the kids over to the shelter. As the kids got older they could feel the tension rising and they would ask if they could go to the shelter.

I worked shift work and he did nothing. I took care of everything. He'd swear at me if I didn't give him money. I used to budget money to give to him. And I put away $50 for safety money. He'd give the kids money too so they'd leave the house. He'd call them names and say they were worthless. The kids noticed his violence more and more and said, "Let's just leave him." I used to go to work with the shiners he gave me just so I could embarrass him and it would bug him when I did that. And I remember my oldest telling me not to have any more kids cause he didn't want to babysit them. When he was eight he had to babysit the younger kids cause my husband wasn't responsible to do it.

I used to resist buying him a vehicle cause I knew he'd get caught for drunk driving. He did get an impaired charge in the end and then he never went back and got his license again.

Once he came home drunk and held a gun to my head and said that if he had bullets he'd blow my head off right there and then. Then we were arguing and I tried to go to bed while he was still asking me for money. He went to the back porch and got an old plate and winged it at my head. I ducked and that plate was going so fast it stuck right into the wall. I just left it there and later he asked me how it got there.

Every weekend the kids went to their friends to be away from him. He never took the kids out because he just wanted to drink. He never did anything with the kids. The kids were scared of him and would end up fighting too.

As the years went by he said more and more things like, "You're useless." "You'll never make it." "No one would want you." If I didn't drink with him he'd say, "You're just trying to be white." He beat me and put me down and was jealous. I thought no one cared and felt like there was no hope.

Once he was choking me and I was on the ground and thought I would pass out. He had a friend in the house with him. I held my breath to make it look like I was dead or passed out. I heard him tell his friend "You never saw anything." Then he turned out all the lights and left with his friend. I got up and could see them just walking down the road.

He would accuse me of fooling around too. He would hit me out on the road and once when I was down on the road he kicked me under the chin. That could have killed me too. I would hide from him around town by wearing different clothes.

Then I told him, "I have left you for good." He begged for a year or two for me to come back. I charged him with harassment. His family was mad at me when I left him. But the kids were glad to be away from their dad. I thought "If I don't do it for my kids who else will do it."

Women ask me how I did it. I say you have to know your finances and manage the money. I had a lot of debts with him and by this summer they will all be paid off. I wasn't sure if I could do it.

Think about how your life is right now and think about tomorrow. Use your strong will. Stick with it and work your way up. He ran up credit cards. Now I save on the side for things I used to use credit cards for. My granny and aunt and uncle used to talk to me about how to save and how to use things wisely.

Put yourself in your kid's position. Even if you think there is no one to talk to, talk to someone and make a decision that you can't live like that anymore ... there may be a better way. As the relationship gets worse, it never gets better.

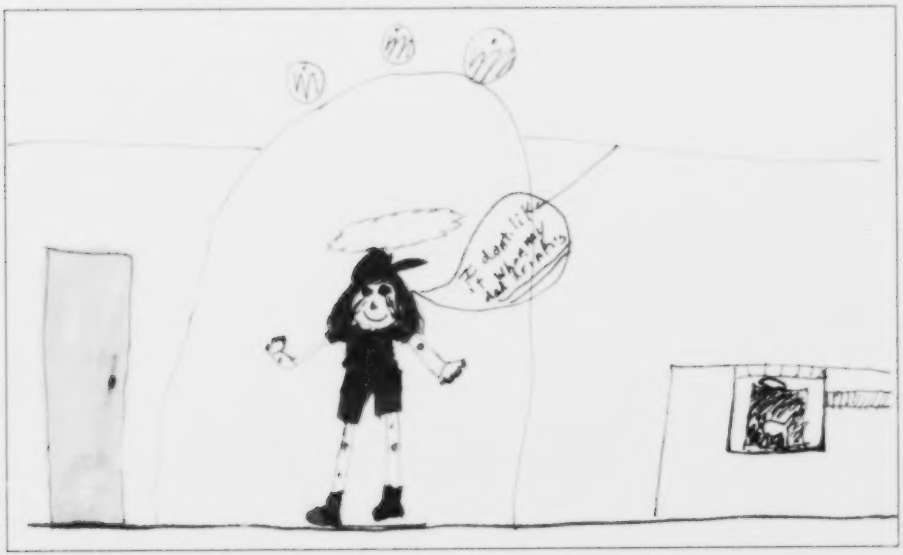
We had a house we owned and when I left it he said I didn't need it cause I left it. When it came time to do the custody and see who got the house I had to borrow money for a lawyer. Legal aid said I was working and because I had $60 leftover after all my bills I didn't qualify for a legal aid lawyer. My ex qualified for legal aid cause he never worked. So I borrowed money and I got custody and got the house. And I paid back the money I borrowed for the lawyer.

If you make up your mind to leave its not that tough. I felt like a single mother anyway. All those years I was floating away from him and it got easier and easier to leave. But I did have fear of the unknown. But you feel stronger when you tell yourself the truth and then you also feel less guilty. Don't let alcohol control your life. You can always find something you enjoy doing. I said to myself "Why am I putting my kids through this?"

I felt free for the first time in my life.

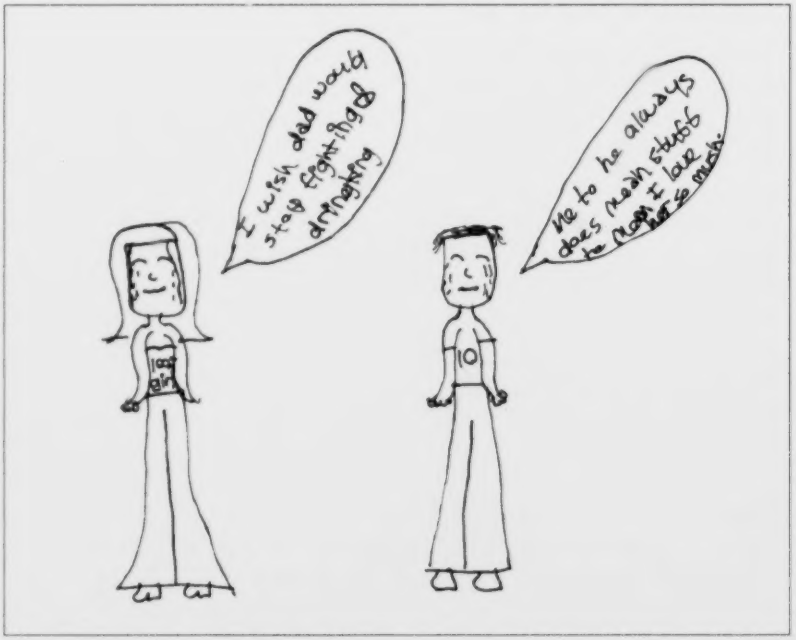
Penny's Daughter Susan

"We had fun at the shelter. They had good toys and the people there were nice. I was scared of dad. My dad always told my mom to stay home. Here is a picture of how I felt."



Penny's Son Johnny

"I would tell my teacher what happened last night and she would let me go to a certain place and sleep. You should tell a teacher if you are having problems at home. It's not good that men are beating up women. Alcoholism is not good for people. We were always crying hard and telling mommy, "Just leave daddy." He told us kids, "You are worth nothing." I would hang onto mom so she wouldn't get hurt. He was also racist against white people and he would break things."



My common-law husband was very very abusive. Everyone thought he was wonderful because in public he was very nice to everyone, very polite ... no one would believe that he was like a monster in the privacy of our home. He did terrible things to me. He would throw me out of the house with no clothes on. I remember standing there in blowing snow with nothing on and not even shoes. I no place to run or go because we lived alone with two children. He would hang me from the ceiling with wires and burn me all over with cigarettes. He threw me through the sea ice in the fall and it was very sharp and I would be cut all over. He pounded me on my face and body till I was just bloody. He pulled out my hair and would point a gun at me and I would go without eating a lot of times or he didn't let me sleep. If his skidoo breaks down he made me walk many miles alone in the dark, weather didn't matter, cold or not.

I wanted to get away from him but we lived alone, away from a small town. We lived out in camp all winter. He would tell me he is going to kill me so no one will live with me again.

We had gone to the small town to do some shopping and found out that the plane was coming in from the bigger town in our region. I wanted to get on that plane and leave but I was very afraid because he always said he would kill me if I leave him. At the last moment the pilot said "Does anyone want to go back to town?" (the bigger town in our region). My heart was pounding but I got on with the baby on my back. My older child was being held by my husband and I told the pilot to go and get her from my husband. I was terrified he would not hand him over but he did. When the wheels of that plane finally left the ground I felt free for the first time in my life. After five months he came to town wanting me back and my relatives told me to go back to my husband, maybe should try harder to make it work. So in the end I went back to him. In those days there were no shelters and no one talked about abuse. I had nowhere else to go.

But in the end I did leave him for good. I was scared for my life. I got my house through housing. My common-law had a new girlfriend but he still harassed me all the time. He

threatened me with death still. He came to my house. One time he brought his wife (they got married) over to the house. So I left the house with my children to visit my Auntie and Uncle. When I told my Auntie about my ex common-law and his wife were at my house she said call the RCMP, so I did. The RCMP came to pick me up and go to my house. When we went in there was blood and hair everywhere. She was covered with blood. He had beat her up in my home. The police told him he could never come to my house ever again under any circumstances. But I don't think they laid any charges on him for beating up his wife. In the end that woman had to be sent to another town. He has abused every woman he has ever been with. But he has never been charged with anything at all. He is still free to this day and living in my home town.

After eight years the sad thing is that I did end up with another abusive man. I lived with him for two and half years. One day he beat me up so bad the RCMP charged him and he went to jail. I was in and out of the Women's Shelter in Hay River. Then I got into another relationship and he was abusive too at that time. We were drinking a lot and we moved to Alberta and I ended up in the shelter again in Alberta. One day we decided together to sort out our lives. He was a wonderful man and we sobered up and had many happy years together. We moved back to Hay River. We both worked in the addiction field and took courses on addictions and healing in Alberta. We went hunting and camping and fishing, we both love outdoor life. He died a few years ago and I miss him so much. Today I feel ready to tell my story publicly and my goal is to help other women who have been abused this way. In particular I want to help older women deal with their feelings after a lifetime of abuse. I am not afraid to describe everything that has happened to me. I stand up for myself now and though I miss my husband I have a strong purpose in my life and want to help other women.

Signed,

Liz Kallak

PLEASE STOP THE
VIOLENCE !

## Angel's Story

It is very hard but I am willing to share it with other women who have been abused if it will help them.

My husband was extremely abusive through our marriage. He beat me up all the time. I have had a broken nose, a cracked skull, bruises and many other injuries. I have had to have medical treatment many times and have been in hospital after his assaults. His family always blamed me for his violence.

He was charged on several occasions with assault and served time in jail. His excuse for beating me was that he believed I was fooling around on him. He said I was always looking at other men. But it was him that was fooling around. He always brought diseases home and we had to always be taking pills and getting shots to get rid of them. But he would blame me for that too saying that I gave him the diseases.

We had five children together. The oldest lives with my mom but the rest were with us. I went to the shelter in our hometown many times and stayed as long as I could there. But there was nowhere for me to go when the two weeks was over. There was no other housing so I had to go home again. I tried to get away but there was nowhere to go. In the end I met another man who was not abusive and I went there with some of my children. But my husband continued to threaten me and often said he would kill me.

Several years ago, a short while after I left my ex husband, I went on a trip with this man and left the four youngest children with my ex husband. When I was going home I saw some police at the airport. It turned out they were waiting for me. They took me to a small room at the airport and told me that my ex husband had shot and killed three of our children. He had then shot himself and was dead too. My second oldest boy had escaped by jumping out a window.

I don't really remember the next year. I walked around in the snow with running shoes. I stayed with different people around town, my mom, my sister and friends. I don't really know what I

did. What kept me alive was having my ten year old son with me and knowing my oldest son was still alive too.

The children that were killed were nicknamed Pannick, Babe and Sunshine. They were 14, seven and four when they were killed. They were such happy children and full of life. They were never down even though they saw the violence. My son remembers how much fun it was to play with them. I remember kissing them every morning and every night and I told them everyday that I loved them. I have to believe that they were never intended to grow up, to have families of their own. I have to believe that it was their time. It's the only way I can go on.

My ex husband's family blames me for the murders and his suicide. I told them I didn't pull the trigger, he did. They even came to the house and took away a box of my skidoo parts. They want other things too but I have said no. A few people helped me a lot but I don't think the town was really behind me. I still couldn't get housing despite the fact that I needed to create a stable home for my son and myself. I stayed with different people for a month of two and then moved on. I moved about four times that first year after the killing of my children.

Then Social Services said if I didn't find a stable home and stable relationship they would take away my son. They accused me of drinking and gambling too, which I was not doing. If my curtains were drawn and lights out they thought I was out running around. I was usually sewing. So they told me if I moved into a stable relationship I could keep my son. I didn't know what to do and I was terrified they would separate us. So to keep him I went ahead and married the man I had been seeing for several years. He had his own place and we moved in so we had "stable housing". I did it for my son, so I could keep him, as I didn't really want to get married.

I am angry about so many things and have so many questions that are unanswered. I don't understand how my ex husband was able to get a Fire Arms Certificate. The social worker even gave him a reference for one and she knew what he was like. I remember at the time that

she hinted that I should give him a reference too. I did because I was afraid of both of them. The coroner's findings said that there were many instances of Social Services failing in their duties. I have never even received any type of apology from them.

I couldn't get a house from Housing despite my desperate situation. They said I had to wait like everyone else. It was over a two year wait and they usually give houses to their relatives first no matter how long you wait.

I also wonder why the police didn't take his death threats seriously. I have written to legal aid asking for help in pursuing these matters with the police and Social Services but in over two years they haven't written back to me. I wrote again several months ago but have not yet received even a phone call in reply.

Right now I have five different jobs to make ends meet. One of my jobs is at the local women's shelter. They did help me when all this happened and I don't know where I'd be now without them, and without my son. We keep each other going. Right now I would like to move to a bigger town and go back to school and do upgrading and be around friendly and kind people. I want to make a real home for my son and myself. My son and I have been severely traumatized and I am not able yet to function normally. We both need to heal from the horror and sorrow we have endured but it is so hard when you live in poverty and have to depend on other people's kindness for a place to sleep. And sometimes I feel like I don't really belong anywhere. I'm so tired of moving from place to place.

After three years of being traumatized I did get some emotional help for myself and my son. I want to move on now. I want to get more education. I want answers to my questions. I want answers from the authorities whose job it was to protect us. I need a real home for my son and myself.

*Stephanie McCabe of the Hay River Family Support Centre holding a picture by Kimberly Ring, age 5, asking people to be nice to each other.*

## Barb's Story

I have had several difficult and unhappy relationships with men. Today I am living on my own and getting help in figuring it all out. I think I have been through every type of abuse with men ... yelling, hitting, jealousy, mind control, taking my money.

I'll tell you about one of these men. He tried to control my thoughts and control me by withholding affection. He'd use my money for drugs. He was good looking and charming with certain people and I think he has used that to get his own way, all his life. He was very conscious of his looks and always had to have perfect clothes and hair, expensive shoes. His mother had warned me about him and told me she doesn't give him anything anymore, no matter what excuse he uses because he'd promise to give back what he took, but it never happened. Nobody liked him because of his attitude. He had no ambition.

When he didn't have drugs he'd be moody so I would buy things for him. He would go to hospitals pretending to be sick to get drugs from them. I think he had ways to make himself spit up blood or look sick so he could get drugs. He still goes to different hospitals down south with one story or another and using different names. I told the hospital here about him so they would stop falling for his lies and tricks.

He has told me all sorts of stories to get me to do what he wants. He says he likes being with "older women". Then he'd tell me, "There won't be any touching" and "Why are you trying to hold my hand." He'd bad mouth my children. (They just hated him.) He'd take my credit cards and talked me into getting new ones and then he'd spend and spend. But if we were out together he always made me give him the money ahead of time so it would look to others like he was paying. He told me, "I've never been in so much trouble since I met you." Then he would say that I was the one who was possessive and jealous.

He was full of stories for every occasion. He told me he'd killed someone once. At one point he also told me a big story about having his hand amputated (which wasn't true) just to get

money. He told me this story while at the same time telling his grandmother another story about getting help for his health and addictions. He had checked himself into a rehabilitation centre. But it only lasted until he needed to have drugs. Then he checked himself into a hospital. I found out about this when I phoned his grandmother and we realized we'd both been told different stories.

I started having all sorts of doubts about myself while I was with him … thinking that maybe I wasn't attractive enough or something, and that is why he didn't want to touch me. He'd promise not to drink and then tell me "I'll do whatever I want." Even after we broke up he still wanted to stay with me because he wanted a free place to live and any money he could get out of me. He'd have jobs from time to time but would always get fired. He'd lie to me and promise to give me money but he never did. I had an expensive ring and I didn't see it again after one of his visits.

In the beginning he was helpful and loving but over time he turned into a moody and abusive user. Today he is down south staying with people and I imagine using them too. I had no bills or debts when I met him and now I owe about $15,000. I was feeling lonely when we met but that kind of relationship just makes you even more lonely. It's not worth it.

## Barb's Letter to Max

December 2001

*Max,*

*I am writing this letter to say, YES, I am damned pissed off with you, and I think that it's about time that I tell you. I have been putting up with your "Bullshit" of blaming me for what went wrong with this relationship for too long. I think that you need to know that, and listen well, it takes two to get into a relationship and it takes two to make it work, as well as destroying it.*

*I am sick of and tired of you blaming me. I also know that when a person blames the other person it is because they don't want the focus on themselves. If you would have listened to me instead of always wanting to be right, and not letting me explain some things, I may have had half a chance. But instead you yelled at me, you withheld love and affection. You just did not want to hear! You wanted total control. Remember when you told me that? Well, the truth was it was the total opposite. I truly felt unwanted, unworthy and unloved.*

*I've said to you many times that if you would have showed the love and affection to me at home I would not have any reason to be insecure, jealous and lacking in self-esteem and confidence. Now, I know you will say, "But you'd get that if you just stop what you're doing and start trusting me." But do you know what? It had to start somewhere. You were never a very affectionate type of person. I recognized that when we were in Winnipeg. I remember telling you that I was a very loving and affectionate type of person and I liked the same kind of treatment. And, if you remember, you said, "I'm not that kind of person to show any kind of affection in public. It should be done at home."*

*I should have taken my cue then and left then. I should have also started dating rather than sticking with just you. Things probably would have been different, especially when dealing with men. I thought that you were the one for me and I really wanted it to work, but I tried too hard to hang on tight. In the end I've lost, but it has been one huge lesson for me. I will begin to date before I get into another serious relationship, and give myself time to learn about men and how to trust them again.*

*You may not think that I knew why you were the way you are today, as a man. So maybe you can let me explain. I do know why. Tell me if I am wrong. Do you know that you are what is called a "misogynist", a women hater? You are a very needy person who is selfish and thinks nothing else of anyone except himself. Due to this you become frustrated and you don't deal with frustration very well. You therefore use drinking, drugging and gambling to cover up those feelings. The biggest thing that I noticed with you was that you withheld love and attention from me. You are vulnerable but you believe that a man shouldn't be vulnerable because it's shameful. You probably believe that your needs are not acceptable so is your partner's because it reminds you too sharply of your own. So you deny those feelings making you insensitive to my emotional and physical suffering.*

*You have denied and repressed your strong emotions and it got stored up inside. Hence your stomach pains, back pain etc. You have been angry with your mother for a long time. It's time that you also deal with your past. Until you do you will not treat women with respect in the future.*

*Now I am not saying that I don't need to deal with certain aspects of my life nor do I deny it. I know what it is that I must come to terms with, as well as what I must do to get on with my life. My past has linked me up to men like you, and if I don't change that I will continue to choose men that are controlling, addicts and fucked up.*

*I deserve to have a man that will love me, someone who I don't have to second-guess whether his feelings are true or not. I became this very ugly bitter woman because I was reminded of my old thought patterns of unworthiness and being unloved. This resulted in anger and disgust with myself for allowing this to occur. I had on many occasions dealt with my past. You may think that I didn't understand myself, but I did. You didn't because you chose not to listen.*

*You've lied to me tonight about not drinking and that you were alone. I know it wasn't true but you continued to lie. How can I believe in you anymore? I cannot trust what you say anymore. I'm far from stupid remember this. You are also very rude by using the "F" word every second word you spoke, and you were*

*obviously showing off for your so-called friends. But you know what? Those so-called friends will not be there for you when you're down and out. Max this time you've made your bed and now you must sleep in it. I will not be your yo-yo any longer. I am finished! I don't care if you cut the phone off or the cable etc. Maybe then you won't call me when you're stuck and have no one that will understand you and come to your rescue. You have finally done it!*

*You can lie, swear and pretend that you're someone to some other fool. I have no time, nor will I put up with your bullshit any more. You have put me down for the last time. You will not wear on my self-esteem or confidence again. Do you know that if I felt good about myself I would not be drinking again and would not let anyone belittle me, put me down or abuse my in any way? I allowed you to take everything I had believed in away: my dignity, my integrity, and last of all the belief in myself. I had it all just one year ago Max. I cannot believe that I let it all go. Am I so weak? I know that I have a lot of strength and I will regain my pride and dignity back. I'm going to start right now!*

*I can only wish you luck and I set you free. I hope that this letter will help you understand that it was both of us to blame and if we were to fix it we both have to be involved. No blaming!*

*Goodbye and Good Luck,*

*Barb*

*Note from Ann Kasook about her song "Mamma":*

A lot of people have asked me which one of my girls I wrote this song for. At the time the words of this song came to me I was going through my own healing journey. For years I had worked on breaking cycles in my life and in 1989 I wrote this song which was my healing song as I was the little girl who went through this painful experience.

This was my healing song as I had never been able to talk about the abuse that I saw and experienced as a child. I witnessed drinking, violence and other addictions and also was a victim of abuse at the age of eight, twelve, thirteen and fourteen. I carried these hurts with me with no one to talk to. I often wondered if the abuse between my parents was my fault and even felt that I was also at fault for the abuse that happened to me.

By this time I felt very unloved and unwanted and started searching for love and security thinking that this was the only way that the abuse would stop. I got married at the age of 16 and worked hard to break the intergenerational cycle of alcoholism and abuse that I experienced as a child which also followed me into my marriage. "Mamma" has given me the opportunity to finally share my pain as a little girl. It has helped me to recognize the cycle, break the silence, heal and finally to break the cycles that have been carried forward from one generation to another.

I did not want my children to experience the same pain that I went through as a child so I worked hard to break the cycles in order to keep my family together. My husband and I had eight children and adopted four others. We also have 13 grandchildren with two more coming in the next few months.

I truly believe that if we can break the silence and the cycle of abuse and alcoholism we can help our children accomplish their dreams.

# MAMMA

*We had another fight last night and you walked out the door*
*I thought that you were gone for good*
*I wouldn't see you anymore*
*I walked into the bedroom and this is what I saw*
*Our baby girl was huddled under a blanket on the floor*
*I went to her and picked her up and held her in my arms*
*I brushed the teardrops from her eyes as*
*she hugged me oh so tight*
*The tears flowed down her tender cheeks*
*as she whispered in my ear*
*These words she had to say to me*
*brought teardrops to my eyes*

*Chorus:*

*Mamma, don't you know it hurts me so*
*Mamma, when you tell him he has to go*
*Mamma, when I'm alone I sit and cry*
*Mamma, sometimes I want to die*
*Mamma, don't you know I love him so*
*Mamma, tell him he won't have to go*

*I hope that you will come back home*
*and try to make things right*
*Our baby girl means so much more*
*than the hurt we have inside*
*Let's try and forget the past and live from day to day*
*To please our little baby girl with a happy home at last*
*My baby girl has taught me about love that should be true*
*These words of love she told to me*
*I hope you will hear them too*
*I'll never forget these words no matter what I do*
*These words of love she spoke to me I'll tell them now to you*

*Written by Ann Kasook*
*July 1989*

# Untitled

We have troubled ourselves with enemies
We are scarred by fear
Our great joys are lost to us
Our sadness is remarkable
We have cloaked our minds with illness
And know not how to approach the new day
We are carefree with our grief
Our pain is seen from afar
~
Our rooms are shuttered from the morning sun
Our doors are closed to the good wind
Our gates are locked to our companions
The songs of birds are shut out by our weeping
The evening longs to be with us
The earth misses our footsteps
The sky seeks for our spirit
~
Our moments are unending
We are echoes unto ourselves
Our agony is on our breath
Our defeat is in our bones
We are confounded by our existence
We are clouds seeking a destination
We are roots ever reaching for permanence
~
Our gardens are overgrown
We have given up to shadows
At our knees we find decay
At our feet there is rot
The night sky shimmers with our tears
The stars blink at our dismay
Why were we not fastened with immunity
And why not a stone where the heart trembles
~
If only we could sing out our despair
And listen to the scattering of our voice
If only the dark would utter 'you are not alone'
And waters speak to our image
What can we touch that will touch us with healing
All the days light is caught up and removed
How shall the sunlight find us
If the morning and the evening do not know us

~

*Bernadette R. Norwegian*
*Copyright, October, 2001*

## FAMILY VIOLENCE SHELTERS

Alison McAteer House, Yellowknife ..... 1-866-223-7775

Hay River Family Support Centre ..... 1-867-874-6626

Inuvik Transition House
24 hours - Call Collect ..... 1-867-777-3877

Sutherland House, Fort Smith
24 hours - Call Collect ..... 1-867-872-4133

Tuktoyaktuk Crisis Centre ..... 1-867-977-2070

## FAMILY VIOLENCE SUPPORT PROGRAMS

Yellowknife Women's Centre ..... 1-867-873-9131

Fort Good Hope Victims of Violence Advocacy Program ..... 1-867-598-2728

Fort Providence Family Life Program ..... 1-867-699-3801

## VICTIMS SERVICES

Yellowknife ..... (867) 920-2978

Hay River ..... (867) 874-7212

Fort Smith ..... (867) 872-5911

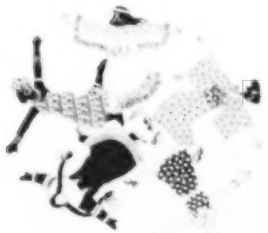
Inuvik ..... (867) 777-5493

If you live outside these centers and need help with your
Victim Impact Statement call collect ..... (867) 920-6911

OTHER HELP/SUPPORTS

Kid's Help Phone Toll Free ..... 1-800-668-6868
Western Arctic Help Line/AIDS Info Line Toll Free ..... 1-800-661-0844
Yellowknife ..... (867) 920-2121
Status of Women Council of the NWT Toll Free ..... 1-888-234-4485
Yellowknife ..... (867) 920-6177
Senior's Information Line Toll Free ..... 1-800-661-0878
Legal Services Board Yellowknife, collect calls accepted ..... 1-867-873-7450
Beaufort Delta Legal Services Clinic Toll Free ..... 1-800-661-0704
Inuvik ..... (867) 777-2030

**The Law Help Line** - free confidential legal information
Tues. & Thurs. 6:00 to 8:30 p.m.
Toll Free ..... 1-867-873-3130
Yellowknife ..... (867) 920-2360



*Status of Women Council of the N.W.T.*

In cooperation with

Northwest Territories Health and Social Services

October 2002